Interview with Alexander A.L. Klieforth

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ALEXANDER A. L. KLIEFORTH

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Q: How did you get into the international information business?

KLIEFORTH: In 1954 I was approached by Gen. Wild Bill Donovan, who had been my boss in the OSS, and he suggested that I join the U.S. Information Agency, which was brand new. Gen. Donovan had just been named ambassador to Thailand, and he thought I might like to come to Bangkok and work with him there. I thought about it, and then another friend introduced me to Sen. Karl Mundt, who was a co-sponsor of the bill which created the Agency, and he thought the Agency was great and had a great future. So I went over to the Agency and put in my application.

Q: What was your background, educational and otherwise, that led you in this direction?

KLIEFORTH: I became interested in public affairs in my second assignment in the foreign service, which was as vice consul in Cali, Colombia. The time was 1942-43, in that time span, and this was the beginning of the cultural and information work of our government, which started, as you know, in Latin America. I was down there as a political and economic

officer, and they had this mission to go out and do things cultural and informational, and I was picked to do the job and I loved it.

Essentially I worked as a branch public affairs officer. We had very few publications to hand out; I did the cultural side, including the exchanges program, which was in its very first beginnings, and it was very difficult. One of the people chosen was a beautiful girl, an outstanding student in the field of chemistry, who was picked by the committee to go to some prestigious U.S. university. Her fianc# didn't like this, and he offered to beat me up in a public place. I finally talked him out of it. He said I had ulterior motives and was trying to get her out of Colombia and away from his engagement with her. That really opened the door for me. But before then, when I was still in college in Wisconsin, I did broadcasting, actually news commentary, for a station in Green Bay, Wisconsin, which was on the old NBC Blue network. Now it may sound a little odd that one as young as I was was doing commentary on the war which was then in progress, but in those days there were very few people who knew what really was going on, and I had just come from Germany and I knew Europe. And then one evening we were having a round-table discussion on the subject of what the Germans were going to do next, and I said, “Well, they're going to go into Norway,” and the next day they did. And that launched me into that field.

Then later on, I was in the War Claims Commission. I started there as a public information officer, and that encompassed all the normal things that you do in the public information field. And then, as to other background, I have five languages, and had been brought up in Europe, as you know, so that it was a natural thing for me to do, particularly since I like people. My preference for public diplomacy over political and other diplomacy is that, as a nonpareil, in our job, whether it is in the broadcasting part or in the field, we deal with people, and that's what I like.

Q: But you didn't wind up in Thailand with Gen. Donovan.

KLIEFORTH: No, I didn't wind up in Thailand because poor old Gen. Donovan became very ill, and by the time all of my papers were through, my clearance was through, he had to be returned to the United States.

Q: So how did you happen to wind up in the Voice?

KLIEFORTH: They didn't quite know what to do with me, but I had gone to seek advice from another person who knew a great deal about the Agency, and that was Congressman John Rooney. I did so because at that very moment I had been offered a job in the private sector that was tremendously attractive. The Agency was still young, it was still suffering from the aftershock of the McCarthy time, and it looked a little dicey, so I went to see John Rooney. What he said was very interesting. He said he thought it was a good idea. “The Agency is going to stay,” but he said, “whatever you do, don't go into a thing called IOP.” This is a direct quote from memory: “That's a damn feather-bedding outfit and a bright guy like you has no business in it.” And then he said, “What you should try to do is get into the Voice. You get into the Voice and you'll go up like a rat on a rope.” Which wasn't a very flattering thing but I knew what he meant. So then I said I would like to go and work in the Voice, I did have some radio experience, the languages and so on, and they said, Fine, and I was assigned to the Voice, first of all in the policy office.

I think I should now go to the atmosphere in the Voice when I arrived there. In the first place, this was March 1955 and the McCarthy era had not really been over completely. McCarthy had had his downfall, but the aftershock remained. I remember very clearly, one day someone came pelting down a corridor — the office doors were always open in those days — and said, “The Streaker is here.” That's not his real name. He had been one of McCarthy's informants. It was like a wind blowing through a forest, doors were slamming all over, and people actually went white in the face. That told me something. He is now a prosperous businessman, and he has repented.

So then I talked to a number of people, including those who stood up. One of them was Bob Bauer. Another one was John Albert. And another one was General Alexander Barmine — untouchable. I think, in honor of Barmine's memory, that Barmine did more with McCarthy and Cohn and Schine to prevent more damage than any other single person. So that was the one aspect, and it took a while for this simply to wear out. I'll come back to it later in another context.

The other aspect was psychological, because the Voice had just moved from New York and was settling down in Washington. This had two aspects: one was the false assumption of distance. The people in the Voice thought and acted as though the Voice were still up in New York and the Agency was down in Washington. The interesting thing was that the people uptown, as we used to say, thought the same way. None of them ever came down to the Voice, we sent our emissaries up there. So the fantasy of distance existed and had a great deal to do with the way the Voice was run, the way policy control was exercised, and so forth and so on. There was this cushion — an imaginary cushion, but it was there.

The other thing was that an awful lot of people still had their homes in New York, and we had what we called the New York weekend brigade. All these people, come Friday afternoon — they'd brought their suitcases to the office — they'd pack up and rush off to New York, and we'd always hope and pray there'd be no crisis over the weekend. The chief of the Polish Service, Joe Gdynski, commuted until he retired. His wife was a psychiatrist in a hospital in New York and she wouldn't move, so Joe commuted back and forth until he retired.

So this psychological climate had a great deal to do with the way the Voice was run. And a third thing was that the director of the Voice at that time was Jack Poppele, who didn't run the Voice, and he had a deputy named Bob Button, who also was not engaged in the operations of the Voice, so that basically the Voice was run by a consortium of the division chiefs. Barry Zorthian was then head of the newsroom. Gene King was the program manager — a lovely person, much beloved by everybody, but he wasn't a person

who was going to fight the division chiefs. The policy manager, for whom I then worked, was Howard Maier, absolutely one of the greats. He was a professional broadcaster, so his concept as to how the policy office was to run was quite different from that which eventuated much later on. He wrote commentaries, still was writing them when I arrived.

The policy office was composed of Stanley Spiegelberg, Charlie Levy, and I think her name was Susan Weissberg — she left after a while — and we had a wonderful time together. The policy office was in this sense a sleepy place, there wasn't that much to do. A representative went uptown to Andy Berding's meeting — Andy was the director for policy — and he went to the briefings given by the Secretary of State, whoever, and he came back and told us what was what, and that basically was it. From time to time they'd crank out guidances on basic issues which were sensible and sound — exposition of what the policy was with respect to a given event, backgrounding it and so forth and so on. You could take a piece like that and use it as the basis of a commentary. I'd go uptown because I became Howard Maier's deputy.

I had a great deal of time, and I used this time to learn about the Voice. I apprenticed myself to Barry Zorthian in the newsroom for two or three weeks. I apprenticed myself to the German Service because it was a very efficiently and well run professional service, to learn how a service should be run well. I also had a brief, being policy officer, to go into any service in the Voice and become acquainted. This is how I got to know an awful lot of people. So when I was assigned as head of a service, I had what I thought was a very much in-depth background training to get going — the organization as a whole, the relationship with the various elements of the Agency “uptown,” and all of the key players.

Q: Was the French Service your first job in the European Division?

KLIEFORTH: The French Service was indeed that, and the remarkable thing was that Gene King, the program manager when I came, told me at the very outset that whatever job I landed up with, it wouldn't be the French Service. “Absolutely,” he said. “Forget it.”

So I said, “Fine.” I didn't have any particular hankering for it. And then a crisis emerged. The French program was relayed in France by the RDF. All direct broadcasts to Western Europe were dropped before I came, and it was a feed program that went into Network Number One of the Radio Diffusion Francaise. They had issued an ultimatum that either the program improve qualitatively or it was going to be thrown off the air, and they gave the Voice three months to do that. I had just come back from lunch and was called in to Gene King. He said, “This afternoon you're taking over the French Service and you've got to get it shaped up in three months.” And we did. At the end of that we not only remained, but they doubled our airtime to half an hour. It was a lot of fun.

What did we do? The program was at that time very similar to many programs in the Voice. You had very few actualities, special events. The pieces were usually one voice, read from a script — and they sounded like they were read from a script, with sort of patchwork continuity to fit them all together. It was frankly dull, and VOA was known in France as La Voix de la Mere Ike — the Voice of Mother Ike. That's what it was known as. So we switched to actualities, we gingered up the whole thing.

We thought that we had to get interesting people, to somehow liven them up. One was Congresswoman Katherine St. George, who spoke beautiful French. Basically, she had worked from a script, so I told her that since she knew American politics, what she should do was simply talk off the top of her head on what was going on, what the problems were between the Congress and the Administration, or whatever. She loved that. It was accepted by the French because one of the conditions for this feed program was that it was supposed to be non-political. Then we had Senator Theodore Francis Green of Rhode Island, who spoke French very well. We got him to do that from the Senate side. He was fantastically well-informed about the history of New England, so what he would do was interweave historical background to explain regional issues. As you remember from history, at one point, 1812, some of the New England states wanted to bolt. He put that into the context of the tensions that we had in the Congress based on regional issues. It was wonderful stuff, and he told me once that he wished that American broadcasters

would do this sort of thing. They really didn't until PBS came around. A charming man, charming man.

Then we got controversial people. One was Guy Mollet, the famous Socialist. We had a tremendous interview with him. He'd been invited to the States by one of the unions, AFL, I think it was. What impressed him was the amount of socialization in the United States, and he came up with a statement that within the capitalist world the United States was the socialistically most advanced nation. Now, this led to trouble, because the aura of the McCarthy era was still there, and this particular broadcast was picked up by the newspapers, the whole interview actually printed verbatim, and it was a very good thing. I was hauled uptown. Furthermore, I had committed a cardinal sin. You remember that we had to clear people (before putting them on the air). I professed ignorance of this procedure, and pointed out that what Guy Mollet said was accurate and very good for our side. This wasn't the first time I had been called up for violating this rule. We had a series of interviews with one of the greatest American composers and conductors, who was then a young man teaching at Tanglewood — Leonard Bernstein. Leonard Bernstein also speaks beautiful French, so I sent one of our fellows up there to do an interview, and he came back with five. A remarkable program, because what he was talking about was the development of music in the United States, the development of composition in the United States, the playing of music, and so on, illustrating himself at the piano. It was first-rate. However, when he was a very young man, Mr. Bernstein had belonged to some outfit, and he was not supposed to be used. With that, because that ran a while, I then went to the Area Director and I went to the chief of Security, who was a very fine person, a very sane person, Paul McNichol. I said, “Look, the McCarthy era is over. Bernstein has just been nominated as the conductor of the New York Philharmonic. If this ever gets public, it's going to make us look worse than asses. It's awful.” As a result of that, and what I thought was one of my first contributions to the Voice, this whole checking system was changed and made much more reasonable. This was for me the perfect case.

Q: The same thing happened with his teacher, Aaron Copland. A member of the German service really didn't know about this ban, and he ran into him in Chicago, got about a five-minute interview and came back and put it on the air. And we weren't supposed to carry Aaron Copland at the time.

KLIEFORTH: But the Bernstein thing was sort of the prima facie case of the stupidity of the whole thing. And there were others. You know Louis Jourdan, the actor. He would talk about the American stage and what was going on, in terms also of problems, and how the American stage differed traditionally from the French stage. This is the kind of person that I was looking for to be in the program. We brought in good music for the bridges.

Q: This is the caliber of people who were appearing on the Voice during the war because they were in this country and available.

KLIEFORTH: An awful lot of them were still in the Voice. But the use of their quality had been tamped down so that it was like going into a parched garden with cans of water and saying, “Let's go, this is the sort of thing we've got to do, real radio.” Starting in the French service, it bloomed, it bloomed.

Another thing (in which) I was getting into trouble a lot: we had a rule that every time you destroyed a classified document you had to type out a sheet saying which document had been destroyed. We had three file cabinets of old stuff, and I went through it and they were all copies and presumably the originals were somewhere else. So one day after work I said, “Let's tear this all up and put it in the burn bags.” We stayed after hours and tore all the stuff up and put it in the burn bags, and then I reported that I had destroyed three cabinets' worth of classified material without recording every single document. That was a cardinal sin of such magnitude that either they had to overlook it or fire me. They very kindly overlooked it. I had nothing to lose. If they fired me there were other things I could do. But I loved it.

Q: Well, following the French Service, you did, as Rooney said, go up like a rat on a rope in the European Division.

KLIEFORTH: Well, then I went into the East Europe Branch. These were the Iron Curtain countries and included, of the Soviet Union, the Armenians, the Ukrainians, and the Georgians. There was a policy reason for that. And I also had general supervision over the three Baltic countries — Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Now moving from '55 to '56, when events were really brewing away in Europe towards monumental explosion. The first of these were the Poznan riots. This was a test case. It was a test case in the sense that I had to find out how quickly the guidance could react in a real crisis. The answer was that it couldn't. Because within this year the Voice had become a little more locked into the Agency and to the Department, and you must remember that the Agency hadn't been in Washington very long either. I told myself that if something happened elsewhere, probably Hungary, that we'd have to be prepared in a different way.

In other terms, I was doing what I had done in the French Service in trying to introduce livelier programs, with the problem that you could only go so far because of jamming.

(The Hungarian story) is a fascinating chapter in the history of the Voice. The Hungarian Service was composed of people who were phenomenally well-informed about Hungary. Paul Nadanyi was in charge, Aladar Szegedy-Maszak, who very recently died, was his deputy. They all had been important people in Hungary. Aladar was the last minister of pre-Communist Hungary to the United States. Tom Szabo had been in the parliament, and so forth and so on. They became convinced that the situation was going to explode. They did not have, as of course we would not have in the Voice, the kind of intelligence that the CIA would go by. What they were going by was social/political analysis, and watching very carefully what was being printed in the Hungarian press. There is one thing called the Literary Gazette — Irodalmi Ujsag — which was getting wild in their criticism of the

government. This was some two months before the uprising, and things were moving very rapidly.

The key for our Hungarian friends was that if the student protest coalesced with the protest of the laboring forces, then it was going to blow. The first evidence of that was two articles in the Irodalmi Ujsag. There were parallels, namely 1848 and the whole tradition of political protest in Hungarian literature and poetry. So I became utterly convinced that it was going to blow in about two weeks. I went and saw the Area Director and the Policy Director and I said, “It's going to blow, in our judgment, and we want guidance — anticipatory guidance.” The long and the short of that was I was sent to the State Department with Lew Revey, who was the European policy fellow in IAE at the time, to state my case to Ambassador Jake Beam, who was in charge of a task force for Eastern Europe. And so I told my whole story. Now, it's pretty hard to persuade a top-notch professional diplomat, Ambassador Beam, on the basis of poetry in the Irodalmi Ujsag, that you're going to have a revolution, but he listened. He finally was persuaded that I had a case, but he said, “We can't give you any guidance until the fact eventuates.” I said, “Why don't you get hold of Secretary Dulles?” Well, he was up on Duck Island and couldn't be gotten hold of.

The result of that visit was that I was convinced that we weren't going to get any guidance until the explosion came. I got together with Paul and some of the other fellows — Polish Service, Czech-Slovak Service, and so forth — and told them what I'd learned, and that we had to decide what we were going to do when the thing blew. And I brought Barmine into this. One of the things that we were convinced of was that the United States was not going to intervene. Because it couldn't intervene. There were geographical factors: how were you going to get to Hungary, march through neutral Austria? You couldn't go through Czechoslovakia, and so forth and so on. And I doubted that we would even fly in aid of one kind or another, a la Berlin. I suspected that we would talk a lot. And we did. So that we were in effect hunkered down, but we were wrong in our estimate: it wasn't two weeks, it

was four or five days when it blew. When it happened, we were locked into the good old 24-hour-a-day broadcast schedule and sleeping in the Voice and all the rest of it.

The one thing that we decided was that we must not do anything whatsoever to indicate that the United States was going to assist in any way until we were told, therefore to cut anything out, including press speculation, that would inflame their hopes. Just report, in a measured way, what the reaction was in the Administration, in the Congress, in the public, but keeping it as low-key as possible. Which was very difficult to do, because a very extraordinary thing developed: the Hungarian Service was on a special thread and taking Radio Budapest live around the clock, and Radio Budapest began talking to our people, in between programs. They were telling us what was going on; they were asking us to go to the Congress and to the President and so on for help, and what they specifically needed: medical supplies, food, mainly in Budapest. That meant that our service was better informed than anyone else in the United States. I make this as an absolute and categorical question because Radio Budapest was getting news from all over and we in turn were passing it on to the State Department and other places where this information had to go.

We had to cope with a great deal of emotionalism on the part of Americans. You know, “man the barricades” sort of thing. I remember in particular a very beautiful Hungarian actress, Ilona Massey — you remember her — she was the wife of Clark Clifford at the time. He arranged for her to come and record a piece. She was crying and emotionally wrought up, and we taped it but we didn't use it. Then this two-way thing continued. The scene moved to the United Nations. Cabot Lodge was our ambassador up there. We set up a cabine, as you say in French, off the floor of the United Nations, and three people from the Hungarian Service were up there, Tom Szabo was one of them, and this line was fed into this little makeshift studio. And while Cabot Lodge was speaking to the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council, we had a runner feeding him what was coming from Radio Budapest continually. I talked about that to Cabot Lodge much, much later, actually when he was ambassador in Vietnam, and he said this was absolutely

fantastic. He was saying, “Right now, four tanks are moving down the such-and-such street. This very minute. And they're shooting in a westerly direction.” Talk about drama! There was nothing like it before or since.

What about policy guidance? Well, first of all, Barmine suggested that for this period of time I also oversee the Russian Service, which was very kind of him, so that the whole area was brought together under one leadership, which made sense. Ed Martin and the engineers volunteered to subordinate their department, as it were, to our needs. So I would go to Anna Case and George Jacobs and tell them, “This is what we need,” and then they'd do it, preempting frequencies, extending to 24 hours in all of those languages. And that meant cranking up more transmitters and adding shifts overseas, like the Munich relay base. And it went like lightning. They'd simply pick up the phone to Munich and call hither and yon, and everything that had any possible direction toward the Soviet bloc was put together and run as an integrated show.

We were getting back-up. Bob Bauer was the Division Chief, and I'd tell him what we were doing. He had been locked into a committee, so he was mostly uptown sitting in a committee. I'd phone him or he'd come around and I'd tell him what we were doing. And then as far as policy guidance was concerned, every morning and every afternoon I'd call somebody in the State Department and tell him what we'd been doing and what we proposed to do and he'd say, “That's fine; that's just right,” and then they'd write it down and send it to the Agency and then it would come out a day or so later as a policy guidance. By then of course events had passed them all over.

Then the thing came to its tragic end. And as usual after these affairs we were pretty exhausted. Still later we had the opportunity of talking to a number of the people who came out. Like General Pal Maleter. He knew about this relationship between Radio Budapest and the Voice, and he said awfully kind things about it. He, like all the others, was very bitter that we hadn't been able to do anything. But there were people who did things. John Richardson, who later became director of RFE, conned Pan Am and all of

the major pharmaceutical companies into loading up a plane, and somehow they got that plane into Budapest. He was an investment banker, as I recall, who became so absorbed in this whole tragedy and the situation of the other people in Eastern Europe that he eventually became director of RFE. That's how he got to RFE. So that was the East Europe adventure.

Q: What about the charges that were made in some quarters, after the events of the Hungarian revolution were over, charging the United States Government, specifically the Voice of America, with inciting and inflaming the situation?

KLIEFORTH: It never came to any formal hearing. There were some questions raised in Congress, but we could prove exactly what was said; we could prove it all the way. I forget who it was on the Hill I talked to, but I told him very candidly how we had operated, what our assumptions were, and so forth, and that was the end of it. RFE was charged with the same thing, and they got pretty close to the border a couple of times. Aldo D'Alessandro, the head of our Munich center, was all wrought up. Later, when I was at RIAS, the question came up in the Bundestag, and Willy Brandt, whom I had gotten to know, asked me to look into it. I went to (RFE in) Munich and was there for about a week, and went back and told Mr. Brandt what my opinion was, and he was kind enough to accept my word. There were parliamentary inquiries and RFE responded, but Willy Brandt took the heat off the whole thing.

Q: So you were then in charge of the East European Branch?

KLIEFORTH: Right.

Q: You moved to another branch then, didn't you?

KLIEFORTH: So I did. Not long after this, Bob Bauer was transferred into the policy office, and that moved John Albert up as Division Chief, so I came up behind John as chief of

West and North Europe, as it was called, and the division deputyship, which was the key to the whole thing. That was the reason for that move.

Q: What was your relationship with John?

KLIEFORTH: Very close. We had monumental differences of opinion at times, as I did with Bob Bauer and Barry Zorthian, too, but we became very close friends because, first of all, I admired John because he was one of those who had stood up to Sen. McCarthy, and that took guts. He had done it beautifully. He had told McCarthy, I'm an Austrian Jew, had to flee my country because of the Nazis, I was able to get out and I'm now an American. I love America and I don't want to see happening in this country what I had to go through in Europe. Period. That took guts. John was Austrian, Bob Bauer was Austrian, Walter Roberts was Austrian, and I became an honorary Austrian because I had gone to school in Vienna and I could speak Viennese — perfect Viennese, which is different from German. Once I was accepted as an honorary Austrian, whatever differences we had, we could work out with Viennese humor, and we became very close friends. I also became close friends with Bob Bauer. One of my great fortunes in life was the number of good friends I made in the Voice — wonderful people, salt of the earth.

Q: Tell me about some of the other "characters" you knew in the European Division.

KLIEFORTH: Well, that would take up our whole time, but I will make one basic point: that these people were totally dedicated to their work. They knew which end was up. They were eager to learn — anything that would improve the quality of their broadcasts. I mentioned before that there was a point beyond which you could not go in those languages which were being jammed. You couldn't get too fancy or you'd lose it all. You had to remain clear and audible. But it was a tremendous experience, and each language service was individual.

You asked for an experience. I'll pick on the Georgian Service. One afternoon a Georgian comes in and says, "Mr. Klieforth, I want to say goodbye and to resign right now because

I am leaving the Voice as of right now." I said, "Why is this so?" He said, "I'm leaving here to kill a person." I said, "Well, how are you going to kill him?" And he said, "With this pistol," and he pulls out a pistol. I said, "That's a little drastic. Why are you doing so?" He said, "He insulted the honor of my family, and as a Georgian there's only one way to expunge this, and that is through death. And I am resigning now because when I am arrested, as I surely will be, I can then say I am no longer a member of the Voice and not bring any shame upon the Voice of America, which I so dearly love." Etc. So I said, "Well, that's very understandable, but it's not a very good idea. I don't think you can get away with it even in the Soviet Union these days, and you can't get away with it in Washington." He said, "I know, I will be executed." I said, "No, you will be sent to prison, which is somewhat different." I said, "Is this pistol loaded?" And he said, "Of course." He hands it over to me, and so I slip the catch and take out the magazine and pull back the slide and take out the bullet, and said, "You're not going to kill anybody." And Gladys (Harris), who had ESP, knew there was something going on and she was peeping through the door, and I made some sign or something to her so that she called Security and a Security guy came around. I told the would-be murderer, "Look, nothing's going to happen. I'm going to give the gun to this gentleman here, who is our security officer, and he's going to put it away and you'll go and get drunk or do something or other, but no murders, please. We don't like this sort of thing." And that was that.

Q: I don't see how you maintained your cool to that extent.

KLIEFORTH: Well, living in the Voice you learned to maintain your cool. And don't forget, I'd been in the OSS for two years, and you learn about maintaining cool under those circumstances. He stayed on, but incidentally he was murdered himself later on, shot dead by the daughter of a very eminent Washington psychiatrist, who was subsequently locked up for having killed while being of unsound mind. He was engaged to her, but his Georgian family said he couldn't marry her because she wasn't Georgian. He had to marry someone else, and he did. And this was very foolish: he was on his way from New York, where he was married, to Florida, stopped over in Washington to tell this lady that they couldn't get

married because he'd just been married that day, and she pulled out a gun and killed him. And she shot four more bullets into him as he lay on the floor dying. Interesting place, the Voice.

(One time) I heard this terrible noise — groans, yells, crashes, furniture being thrown around, it sounded like. I started out and Tibor Borgida — a very dear person and another very close friend — Tibor was standing at the door and said, “You can't go in there, you can't go in,” and I say, “You're goddam right I'm going to go in, they're killing each other in there!” He says, “No, you've got to let them settle their differences in their own way. Don't intervene! I beg of you, don't intervene.” So I said, “All right, I won't intervene, but when things are calmed down I'm going to go in there and count the bodies.” So he says, “All right, I'll let you know.” So I went back to my office. Then Tibor came and said, “It's all right now.” Everybody was sitting at their desk, doing whatever they did. All was calm, so I said, “What was going on here?” They said, “Well, we had a discussion about Greco-Roman wrestling, and were trying out various holds.” Life was full of these things. Practically not a day went by that it wasn't an exciting place.

Q: Any particular other memories of those years in the European Division, before you went off to RIAS?

KLIEFORTH: Well, yeah, because a great change came, and the change was the arrival of Henry Loomis on the one hand and the elevation of Barry Zorthian as program manager on the other. This was '58. The whole atmosphere changed, in that there was now very definite direction from the top, in the most positive way. Henry had a slogan, that he thought that his job was to create an atmosphere, an ambience, where creative people could create. And that's how he went at it. And with Barry as program manager, with his newsroom experience and incredible energy, it changed from having been run by the consortium of division chiefs to very definite direction from the top. But this was anything but arbitrary direction, because there was a great deal of give-and-take between the uppermost management, which included —very much so — the deputy director, who was

Jack O'Brien, I think it was, at the time. We had a tremendously positive atmosphere. But again, we felt very free, certainly within the Voice, to exhibit our opinions.

The first time I ever lost my temper completely at the VOA was with Barry Zorthian over something that I have absolutely no recollection of. But I lost my temper. Remember those big aluminum disks we had? I had one of those and was slamming it on the desk so that my hand was hurt, and Barry sat there, and he said, “Alec, what's the matter with you? You don't act this way normally. Are you all right?” I said, “No, I'm mad!” And then he says, “You've got to take it.” He was more upset about the fact that I had lost my temper with him than what I was mad about, so he immediately agreed to whatever it was that I wanted. It was very good working with Henry and Barry. The spirit of the former consortium still continued, in that — certainly at that time and subsequently — we division chiefs worked very closely together.

Q: Let's come to RIAS now. How did you happen to be picked for RIAS?

This was still '58. RIAS was having problems, and the ambassador in Bonn asked the Agency to have RIAS inspected. I was selected as head of this team, and there was a fellow from management who was very good. The deputy PAO in Bonn, John McGowan, and I had known each other from OSS, so we worked very closely together. I went to Berlin and did the inspection, and then went to Bonn and wrote it, and then had to report to the ambassador, who was David K.E. Bruce, who had also been one of my bosses in OSS. He was chief of the Secret Intelligence Division of OSS Europe, to which I had been attached. I made the report, and he said, “Well, you're going back to Berlin and run RIAS.” I said, “Well, it's a lovely job, but presumably the Agency will have something to say about that, and I've got to talk to my family,” and so forth and so on. He said, “I know you can persuade your family, and I've already talked to the Agency and they've agreed to it.” So then I went to Washington and went and saw Walter Roberts, who was then Area Director for Europe, and said, “Is this true?” And he said, “Yes, it's true.” I said, “But nobody asked me!” and he said that has nothing to do with it. You've got to go to Berlin, which you love,

and do it. I'd been in Berlin very many times. I started school in Berlin. My father was stationed there '24-'28, and then '30-'33, so that I had a very close affinity with the city. And I loved RIAS; after that inspection I thought, “God, what a job!” So my wife agreed, and we packed up and went to Berlin.

Q: What were the problems that you cited?

KLIEFORTH: The problems had to do with two things, basically. The immediate problem was Khrushchev's '58 ultimatum and threat of a new Berlin blockade and everything. That was the one thing. The other thing was that RIAS had not come out of the Cold War. The Voice had, under Henry Loomis. Going back to the European Division — the most important thing that I had to do as European Division chief was to get, particularly the Russian Branch and Alex Barmine, turned around, and then eventually to get Alex Barmine out of the Voice, which was done honorably. Alex and I had become friends, and because of that it worked. But to get this whole thing turned around. This was the problem with RIAS.

Now, the official policy of our government was the reunification of Germany, but any realist accepted that it wasn't going to come soon, and probably not in our lifetime. Therefore, you had to think ahead, and some of these realists were in the State Department. No one had talked to me about those lines, really. You know, You've got to turn things around. And that we did. We instituted what was called a Rahmenprogramm, block programming, and it worked. Then the State Department did send somebody over with a huge memorandum. I knew the fellow, and he said, “What have you been doing?” And I told him, and he took this memorandum and tore it up, and said, “We don't have to tell you anything. It's been done.”

So that was the other thing. And then, as usual, a personnel problem. This is endemic in the Agency: in the field you hire people as specialists, and they become permanent, and then their specialty is surpassed and you can't crank them over into something else.

So you have to solve that some way or other, and the way I solved it at RIAS was that as vacancies occurred I didn't hire people permanently; I hired them under contract, which you could do at RIAS, as it was under quite a different aegis than the Agency. So we were able to get young blood in, and what I was primarily interested in — having in the back of my mind no reunification for real — was to get at the young people, and so more and more programs, substantive programs, were developed, and they worked.

Q: How much of the leadership and how much of the financing was U.S. vs. the Bundesrepublik?

KLIEFORTH: When I got there, we paid the whole thing. In the following year, the Agency was in a budgetary bind, and said they had to make a very deep cut in the contribution. So that went back and forth, and I said, “All right, I'll try to go for 40 percent, because we should maintain the controlling interest as long as possible.” I had one advantage. I had gotten to know Willy Brandt quite well. And I told him what was what, under pledge of great secrecy. He said, “Fine, you'll have my support.” So then it went to the Minister for All-German Affairs, via the Bonn PAO. Willy Brandt had called someone and said Alec Klieforth is coming and please listen. So then it went to the Chancellor, who was Adenauer.

Fortunately, I knew Adenauer quite well, because when my father had been consul general in Cologne before the war, Adenauer's house was opposite ours, and a system existed between friends so that when the Gestapo was after Adenauer, if there was time he would disappear into the mountains, known as Eiffel, and if there wasn't time then he would disappear into our house. So I had known him as a university-age student. Then during the war, when we went into Germany, I had a special mission: to find Adenauer and bring him to Cologne where we were establishing military government. It's a long story. I missed him. I got too smart. Adenauer knew exactly what was going to happen and put himself where he was going to be found, and so when I did find him he was already in Cologne, sitting on a crate in a corridor in one of the few buildings that was still standing,

and he saw me and said, “Well, Alexander, late again.” We sat on the crate and talked together, talked and talked and talked.

The question Adenauer had was, is it necessary, and was told Alec Klieforth supports it. He said, Well, if Alexander thinks it needs to be done, then let it be done. Then I was put into negotiation with the permanent under secretary of the Ministry of All-German Affairs, and we worked out this 60-40 deal, 60 percent U.S., 40 percent German. Then the question was how to get the money into the RIAS account without divulging to the public that it was coming from the Germans. The Agency worked it out that the money had to go into the unvouchered funds of the U.S. Treasury, and the Treasury then earmarked it over to the Agency and the Agency earmarked it over to RIAS. Then we got to 49 and 51 percent, and then after I left it got to the present level. It's over 90 percent now.

Q: How long were you in Berlin altogether?

KLIEFORTH: I was in Berlin two years, and they were absolutely great. I keep saying, “It was great, it was great,” but everything WAS great.

Q: Do you have any other memories of that period that you'd like to get on the record?

KLIEFORTH: Just a description of what I did, because this is utterly unique. I was in effect running a large — because they broadcast 24 hours around the clock — a first-class radio operation with everything that in Europe pertains to it: symphony orchestra, light music orchestra, dance band — which was Werner Mueller's band, which was terrific — real drama, full-length opera, everything. I remember reading one time in Time Magazine that Hindemith had not written a large piece in many years. He was in Los Angeles, and we called him. We said, in effect, “How come you haven't written a large piece in many years?” And he said, “Who'll play it?” “We'll play it.” So he said, “Fine, with one condition: that I be allowed to conduct it.” “How much is this going to cost?” He said, “Well, put your people in touch with my agent and we'll work it out.” He said, “Don't worry, don't worry.” What the man charged actually was his flight to Berlin and a fee for orchestra rehearsal.

That's all it cost. And we put it on. That was the last piece he composed, because he was really unwell, and from Berlin he went to Switzerland where he died. But RIAS could do this kind of thing.

One other thing. In Berlin there's a thing called a Documents Center, which we are turning over to the Germans. That is a repository of the membership archives of the Nazi Party there, which were captured almost intact in a bunker in Berlin. One day one of the people called me up and said, “We've found a box here of wax cylinders. They must be something.” We said, “Send it over.” So I went to my engineers in RIAS and said, “I'm getting a bunch of wax cylinders; can we get sound out of them?” And they said, “Well, we'll find some way of doing it.” They did find something, I think in a museum. What it turned out to be were recordings of Hitler, made during what you might call intimate staff sessions. Some of them were reproducible, a lot of them were shot, but in one of them that was reproducible Hitler was explaining why it had to be an Austrian to become the leader of Germany: that the Germans are stupid, they follow blindly; the Austrian has the mentality, has the smarts; this, that and the other thing; and this is why God destined me to become the leader of the Germans. So we extrapolated all the sound that we could from that, and made an extraordinary broadcast — the first time that Hitler's voice was broadcast in Germany since the end of the war. And since we had broadcast it, the others picked it up.

Then we did other things. “Why did so many Germans vote for Hitler?” This came out of group discussions. I'd been in Germany before the war, I'd seen Hitler, actually I'd met him once, at a diplomatic reception when I was a kid, and they said, “Well, you were there as an inside-outsider. Explain to me how my parents, who were good God-loving people, could vote for this monster.” And so we got to talking. We could do it; we were American. We put this program together with a lot of interviews, and the fellow who did it later left RIAS and he is now the editor-in-chief of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. He wrote a book about it, which was sensational, and then they made a movie. Anyway, this documentary that we produced was the first exposition of that kind in Germany since the

end of the war. And because RIAS had broadcast it, all the other stations could pick it up. As Americans, we could address ourselves to that.

Then you know Guenter Grass. We thought The Tin Drum should be made into a show. So we called Grass, and said, “Herr Grass, we'd like to dramatize your book.” He said, “On one condition.” We said, “What is it? And he said, “Let me do the dramatization.” So we said, “Fine, come to Berlin.” It was very hard and hot stuff. And then the film was done very well, in a very good adaptation. So people like Guenter Grass and others considered it a privilege to perform for RIAS. Where else, not just in the Agency, but where else do you have that kind of a job?

Q: How many Americans were on the staff as opposed to the Germans?

KLIEFORTH: We had about three hundred Germans and six Americans — now there are only two — myself, a deputy, two program officers, an American supervising engineer, and an American secretary. The engineering position was one of the first to go. The equipment was American. One of the Americans was Ed Alexander, who was not only a jazz buff but very knowledgeable and had a fantastic collection. So he did a jazz program, which went over tremendously. There was this constant creativity.

Q: So how did you get back to the Voice? What were the circumstances of your return as program manager?

KLIEFORTH: One day Henry Loomis came to visit us in Berlin, and wanted me to come to the Voice as program manager, and I said, “Absolutely no way!” I said, “I love it here, I'm not going to leave here. I'm coming up for a second tour and have got this locked in, and that's the way it's going to be.” We got into a heated argument, and I very much regret to say that I lost my temper with Henry. I had driven him to Tempelhof Airport, and his wife Pauli was along. She kept saying to me, “Alec, don't get mad at Henry. He's trying to do the best thing.” We got to Tempelhof Airport and I slammed the door shut, and I said, “Henry, never, never!” Two weeks later, I got a letter from Ed Murrow. It said, “Dear Alec:

I'm up to my first personnel decision. Please make it easy for me and come to Washington and take the VOA job. Sincerely yours, Ed Murrow." You can't turn that kind of request down. So we packed our bags and went to Washington.

Q: So Henry won.

KLIEFORTH: Henry won, though he never, ever admitted having anything to do with it. I obviously took him to task, but he said, "No, this was entirely Ed's idea."

Q: Well, did Ed know you before?

KLIEFORTH: Vaguely. But we had a lot of friends in common.

Q: But would it have occurred to him without the intervention of Henry Loomis?

KLIEFORTH: No. Henry had proposed me, and Ed being Ed said, "Well, it's a rather important job, I want to check it out." He talked to a couple of people — one was old Mike Fodor, whom I'd known from childhood, teen-age. He'd taught me journalism when I was fifteen in Vienna. My father said, "If you want go into diplomacy you have to learn reporting first, and there's so better man to learn it from than Mike Fodor."

Q: Someone told me that Mike Fodor introduced Dorothy Thompson and John Gunther to journalism, started them out.

KLIEFORTH: John had been with the Chicago Daily News, and went to Vienna, and worked with Mike Fodor, who made him into the great journalist he became. I'd known him from my youth on; he and his then-wife, Frances, were very close friends of my parents. We stayed in touch until he died. Mike Fodor spawned a whole group of great journalists. John Albert worked for Mike Fodor. Bob Bauer worked for Mike Fodor. Mike would send me out to do a story, and then criticize, and send me back, and criticize, and send me back and criticize, and would say, "Now, you've seen what you were supposed to see." He

taught me a great deal about observation. But anyway, Ed Murrow talked to a number of people, and Henry told me that writing me was Murrow's own idea.

Q: Well, you lost Berlin and came back to Washington. In the time you were gone, Henry had promulgated the VOA Charter. Did it make your job as program manager — in light of your earlier breaking of the crockery — did it make your job any easier?

KLIEFORTH: There was no problem because work on the Charter had begun before I left VOA. Henry got together the division chiefs and, of course, Barry. I remember it very well; the first meeting was at his house out at Middleburg. He said, in effect, “What VOA needs is a charter. What kind of charter do you guys feel you need in order to meet the requirements of being a government agency and operating the way you think you should?” So a whole bunch of us worked on it. I remember Jerry Stryker was working on it. Len Reed did a draft, Sandy Marlowe did a draft; we were making drafts all over the place. Then we had another meeting and went over our drafts, and picked out what was useful and then Jack O'Brien took these various ideas and put them together. Then we had another meeting, at which we went over the proposed draft. And at that point I broke off and went to Berlin. You can't get a thing like that done overnight, because you had to get it through the Agency, you had to get it through the State Department, and you had to get it through the White House.

Q: It was supposed to be over Eisenhower's signature, but he never signed it and it was issued by George Allen.

KLIEFORTH: He never signed it, but still Eisenhower was given the credit — “by authority of the President.”

Q: So when you came back, and it was then in effect, did it improve your modus operandi, so that you didn't have to refer everything uptown?

KLIEFORTH: It improved things to the degree that one had to argue less because you had a document: here it is, in the Charter. But up to that point the solution of policy problems was not all that bloody. We were able to get accommodation to our ideas. The problems were in interpretation and gut feelings. To give you a specific example. This didn't have to do with the Charter, but had to do with how the job of the Voice was perceived by others, in this case Ed Murrow. You may remember that President Kennedy gave a very important foreign policy speech at Johns Hopkins University, and so the word was that you broadcast it in full and keep pushing it for a whole week. So we broadcast it full, and then we had a little chat among the division chiefs and myself to decide how we were going to push this for a whole week and not bore our listeners to death. There were news pegs you could go back to, there were newspaper editorials you could go back to, various kinds of commentary; you could always bring Jack Kennedy's voice in, and so on.

Then Tom Sorensen, who was the policy director, heard that we were not broadcasting the whole thing in full, day after day, which was what they expected. So I was called in to Ed Murrow, and he said, “Tom Sorensen tells me you contravened orders.” I said, “No, I did not. The orders were to fully carry the messages of the President's speech at Johns Hopkins for a week.” I said, “Ed, I don't have to tell you about radio. If we broadcast the full Kennedy day after day, day after day, we're going to lose audience.” And Ed said, “Alec, this time I've got you by the short hairs. This time I've got you in a direct contravention of orders.” I said, “Okay, Ed, but hear me out first.” I told him the whole thing, and — this is Ed Murrow — he said, “You know, the trouble about being objective is that it's a goddam hard thing to admit when you're wrong.” And he said, “You're right. You're right.” So that was it.

Then, another thing we had, about Cuba. Here we get to a major issue of long-range policy. Somebody said we weren't hard enough on Cuba, so I get called up to Ed Murrow, and we talk about this and talk about this and I said, “Look, Ed, after the Bay of Pigs, what the hell are we going to do? We're not going to invade Cuba. Are you telling me we're

going to invade Cuba? Are we going to bomb Cuba?" And he says, "No! Cuba is a dagger pointed at the soft underbelly of the United States, and we never can give up on Cuba." I said, "Fine, we can't give up on Cuba. But what is it that we want to do with Cuba? Do we want them to revolt? Do we want them to assassinate Castro? What is it that we want? If we're supposed to work out programs, we should have an idea of what the United States wants." So he says, "I'll tell you. I've got to call you back." He called me back, and he said, "You know, we don't have a good policy on Cuba." So I says, "Ed, we'll work it out. I'm not going to ask for a United States policy for Cuba; I'm going to ask for a broadcast policy for Cuba. So we got the gang together again and worked out what seemed reasonable, and that was to stimulate peaceful change. Basically, that was the idea. So I drafted this thing up as a broadcast guidance and took it to Ed, and he read it and said, "Well, I'll pass it around." And then we got it as a basic guidance. That was it, at least as long as I was there.

Also with respect to the People's Republic of China. Jerry Stryker brought this up; he was an old China hand. This was when it became apparent that we were having a growing audience in the PRC. He said, "What are we going to tell them? And what do we want them to do?" So, back I went, and there was no clear policy. Long-range, we wanted the Chinese people to have a free and democratic state, things of that nature. So we drafted a broadcast guidance paper, and it got cleared by everybody, I remember, including the CIA. Everybody thought it was great. Now we had a document. These sorts of things, in a way, stemmed back to the Charter, because you had a point of reference from which to go.

Q: It's ironic that you have to prepare your own guidance, which you then give to uptown and uptown sends it back to you as guidance.

KLIEFORTH: In the real world it's not so ironic, because outside of an operation like the Voice there are very few people who understand how it operates — long-, medium-, and short-term. Most Americans, when they think of information dissemination, propaganda, or whatever you want to call it — including Americans in the government, including

Americans who run things like the U.S. Information Agency — they think short-term. They're thinking about implementing a specific policy of the Administration then in power, and they don't think much long-term. And an operation like the Voice is by definition long-term. It has a daily function, but if it's going to have some purpose other than merely telling the news, and what's the latest thing on Broadway, you've got to have a direction in which you're going. Other people don't think of that sort of thing. (That's true of) every Administration that I've served since Roosevelt.

Q: It was during your tenure as program manager of the Voice, Alec, that we really got started with programming to Africa, because many of the African countries were becoming independent. What was the thinking that went into the decision — to start, in the first place, and what kind of programming in the second place?

KLIEFORTH: The initiative for this was entirely Henry's (Loomis). Henry had been in and out of Africa a lot, and he was interested in broadcasting in and to Africa. He came back and said, “By God, we ought to be broadcasting to Africa.” There was certainly consensus in the Voice — you know, the more the merrier. There was some hesitation uptown because of budget reasons: that's going to cost a lot of money. For instance, a new transmitter had to be built. The validity was accepted. The transmitter was built in Liberia, as you know. And as to programming, we thought the wise thing to do was to find out what the Africans would want from us and then meld it in with what we thought we should broadcast.

Among other things, Henry sent me on two long trips to and through Africa. I did not visit Africa north of the Sahara and the area dominated by South Africa, but beyond — Rwanda, Burundi, and all those places, including then Congo Brazzaville, which had been French. There I talked to government officials, broadcasters (such as they were), our own people — USIS and embassy and so on, BBC people, where they were, and began developing this concept of cross-reporting. There was no one then cross-reporting African news to other parts of Africa. Not only straight news but background stuff and other

things, including culture. The problem was that we couldn't turn ourselves into an African broadcaster, but we certainly could have a program segment devoted to that. The other problem was the almost non-availability of African news on the wire services. Actually, the best one at that time was Reuters, which had a good African service. Agence France Presse was voluminous but not always accurate.

We gradually developed news sources, we developed the actual program formats, and we found the native speakers. This was not always easy. I had many an adventure traveling around; it was fascinating. When we went into Hausa we had to get the permission of — the title wasn't king, but I forget what it was; he was an emir, but he had an African title — the ruler in Kaduna. This was out of A Thousand and One Nights. His bodyguard wore chain mail and helmets that were an adaptation of Crusaders' helmets, as the chain mail was, silk underneath — it was gorgeous. He consented to have some of his people go to Washington and join the Voice of America. So that is how we got started.

As the program manager for Africa in Africa, working out of Monrovia, we selected Bill Miller, who knew nothing about Africa but who was famous for having an incredible rapport with indigenous people wherever. He really did. I had him along on this trip to Nigeria that I mentioned en passant, and it was proved over and over again. And he was also a very fast learner. So that's how we put the program together.

There were problems as we went along. For example, one case: one of the announcers decided to bring his wife from Kenya, and she had never been out of the village where she was born and was married. To get from the village to Nairobi, in the plane, to London, from London to Washington, and so forth, and zing! there she was with her cooking pots. That's what she brought, earthenware cooking pots. So we had to develop a receiving committee, all volunteers — a lot of these people came in at night — who would meet them and help them get housing and so forth and so on. So that's how the thing grew.

Q: I remember a meeting in your office with Henry Dunlap and Jack Logan on the African Division side and Jerry Stryker and myself on the Worldwide English side, in which you Solomonically came down with the decision that the African Division, in their English broadcasts, would report Africa to the Africans, and Worldwide English would bring the Africans a window on the world.

KLIEFORTH: Which I thought was the only way of deciding that, because you had to keep the two distinct; if you mix them together it gets fuzzy.

Q: Looking back at those years at VOA, what would you say were your proudest accomplishments?

KLIEFORTH: It's very hard to say. Survival is one thing. You've worked with the Voice for 30 years, and this is one area of endeavor where there is very much living day-to-day. You live by the slogan that 60 seconds can be a long, long time. It kept moving along, and when I finally left the Voice to go into the field as a foreign service officer I certainly had no regrets and a great many happy memories, which last to this day. And as to accomplishment, I was part of a team, and that's one of the things I hoped to achieve, really get a team approach and decisions. There were few times when I alone and arbitrarily had to make a decision, like when Kennedy died. But we worked through a consensus, and it wasn't a put-together consensus. No, as they say in German, faule Kompromiss, smelly compromise; it was clean, and I felt that one of the things that I wished the Voice to do, other than being a disseminator of news and that kind of information, was to be an instrument of teaching. With Special English, and with many of the programs, I think the Voice became a great teaching institution, without being didactic. I still have some of the books of what we can think of as the VOA University of the Air, which are scholarly, first-class works — the Forum Series. That supports my point that I was trying to make about VOA being a teaching institution.

Q: You talked about the relationship between the Agency and the Voice. As you know, back in '75 the Frank Stanton Commission came out with the recommendation to restructure the Agency functions: put some back in the State Department, that were directly policy-supportive; move VOA out as an independent agent; and take the cultural-educational exchange program and put it in some kind of shape, separate from policy-supportive activities. Now, Senator Pell has made a speech in which he has brought up the same sort of question. How do you feel about this? Henry Loomis, of course, doesn't want to see it separated. He thinks the Agency should stay intact; he thinks the agency leadership is a buffer between the Voice and the White House and State Department. As I told him, some of us at the Voice have felt that we had more problems with the Agency leadership than we ever did with the State Department or the White House. What's your view?

KLIEFORTH: In principle, I agree with Henry. If it isn't the Agency, it's going to be something else, and to quote somebody or other, the known devil is better than the unknown devil, and it isn't so much that. Again, I can't speak at all to recent years. If I knew more I might have a total change of opinion. I'm speaking of the time I served there. The thing was that we were able to accommodate the desires of the administration. There were times, very definitely, when the Agency acted as a buffer vis-a-vis the Congress, and various other things.

There's one thing that occurred to me as you were propounding your question. Take the BBC, the BBC's external broadcasts, which as you know originated as an overseas broadcast to the British Empire — news from home. Then you got to the point of World War Two, when they began hanging on the foreign languages. And then they fit into, generally, this concept of broadcasting to an overseas audience, which was not necessarily the normal BBC audience. You then have the introduction of your guidance body from the Foreign Office. I've talked a number of times to the people in the BBC, and they had some very bitter moments — the time of Suez being one of them — when I was

told by them, “You are lucky, although you keep bitching about it, that you have some outfit to take the first shock. That at least gives you time to prepare your defense. The way we're constituted, the knife can go to the heart,” or words to that effect, without any shielding. I had never thought about it in that way until I talked to those people. So my conclusion is that, with all of its faults — and in any democratic institution there may be as many faults as virtues — that over the years, and there've been a great many years, it is better than splitting the whole thing up. I can see culture back in State where it would become very politicized.

Q: There's now talk about putting it under the Smithsonian Institution, which I find strange.

KLIEFORTH: The Smithsonian Institution has no facility for administering that kind of thing. I've worked with the Smithsonian on overseas exhibits, and they do have an international department, and they have enough problems with their international exhibits department. To take on an ongoing cultural presentation program — they couldn't do it.

Q: We'll change from VOA now to your subsequent career. You went to the Senior Seminar when you left the Voice. What was that year like? What did you do your project on?

KLIEFORTH: My actual project was modernization in Nepal, which I enjoyed very much. It was suggested to me by one of my classmates, who was a USAID officer. He said, “You know, this has never been done, and why don't you do it?” So I said, “Fine, I'll do it.” I went to Nepal, and as a return for this favor, I promised to inspect the USAID operation in Nepal for them, and did. Which was also useful to my study because they were very much part of the modernization. It was a tremendously positive year, and payoffs continued throughout my subsequent career. It made a very valuable transition from a very highly-pressurized day- to-day operational responsibility to something else. So I could come up for air and learn a good bit, which I think I did.

Q: So it was professionally valuable.

KLIEFORTH: Absolutely.

Q: Following the Senior Seminar, you were named PAO in Rome. What did you do to establish yourself in your new role?

KLIEFORTH: As it happened, I had three assignments as PAO — Rome, Jakarta and Bonn — and I came to each one following a bad inspection report. I got to pick up the pieces, which is in many ways an advantage. In the case of Rome, I had read the inspection report, and I thought that program was so far down the hill that it wasn't worth it. And it wasn't people in the Agency, it was people in the Department of State who convinced me to go to Rome. And I'm damn glad I did because the lady who cooked your lunch is one of the results of that assignment. So I went, and the program had become ossified. I can't think of a better word. It had been decimated by reductions, with the result that they kept cutting the branches from the tree, so to speak, so that you had a big fat trunk and little branches. It had become very centralized.

From the start I thought that several things were indicated. One, and that sounded strange for a West European industrial nation, was to bring in the concept of modernization. The other thing was to orient the program to young people. Now, Italy, as you know, had and still has the largest Communist party in Western Europe, and on the surface an unstable series of governments. But since the fall of the Empire they have managed to keep on going; how is one of their mysteries, which is very lovable. There was also a problem with NATO — this was 1967 — and the Italians were going through one of their traumas that we were going to pull out of NATO and leave them high and dry. And on the other hand they didn't think that NATO might do much good, so that there was a kind of mixed psychological climate, and not particularly good.

What I then tried to do was enliven the program by decentralizing from Rome, and sending troops out back into the seven, I think it was, branches, to have a great deal of flexibility. I reopened some, in one guise or another. Rooney had closed one of them, Florence, and when he was in Rome one time I told him, I said, “Chairman, I want to reopen Florence,” and I told him why, and he says, “All right, but you've got to do it cagily, so it doesn't become obvious.” So I did it by sliding in one Italian and then a second Italian. The Consul General happened to be a former officer of the Agency and I got room, I got books, and got the whole thing started, and what Mr. Rooney finally saw was the opening of a Reading Room in the consulate in Florence. We moved on from there, and eventually got an American officer.

But in this modernization game, one has to find what is germane to the culture that you're addressing, because not all American experiences, as you know, are transferable. One of the things that I seized on early was education. Despite the then student riots in the universities (in the U.S.), we were doing fantastic things, architecturally and in libraries, curriculum changes and so forth. So we devised this monster exhibit in the Palazzo dei Esposizione in Rome, which is an enormous thing, and was actually an aggregate of something like 120 separate little exhibits, of which the Agency furnished two, a book show and something to do with science, and the rest we got from the private sector and from various American institutions. For example, Univac was then opening its European office, and they put a terminal in this exhibit and programmed it to answer any questions in Italian or American history. Something like this had never been done before, and it was to the Italians wildly exciting. The other thing I decided was that whatever we did had to be multi-media, not just a static flat exhibit. So we had films, we had speakers, we had music.

And then, bless them, the ultra left bombed the exhibit on the evening after its opening, not with explosives but with tear gas. It was pretty ghastly. Gloria and I went in immediately without masks, and I'd been through those chambers before in the military, and it was pretty awful. But that hit all of the newspapers in Italy, and the main Communist paper,

Paese Sera, they'd been at the opening of the exhibit and thought it was great. They said this action was anti-cultural, they denounced it, we got fantastic television coverage, and the long and the short of it was, just about every educational institution in Italy sent people to Rome to be taken through this exhibit. We had to crank up guides, and so forth and so on. Then we broke up pieces of it and sent it on tour all around Italy. All we had in a political sense was, as you came in, there was a big — not too big — sign saying, roughly, “As you know, in the United States, we have demonstrations against our policy in Vietnam, we have campus unrest, we have uprisings of some of our black population, and so forth and so on, but you should know that beautiful things are being done in education. Come in and find out.” That was it.

Then, also in modernization, there's a thing called the Casa para il Mezzogiorno, a government institution which is supposed to bring modernization to the Mezzogiorno, southern Italy, and it never got much support from the government. So with the ambassador's consent, I went and talked to these government entities. I said, “Look, I'm speaking from an American self-interest. Southern Italy needs to be raised up economically. We've got our bases in Naples and Taranto and so on. We know what the hinterland is like and we would like to participate.” (There was no aid program in Italy.) We worked out a whole series of, in effect, programs with the Casa para il Mezzogiorno: seminars, lectures, demonstrations, and so on, and nothing like that had been done before. Did it work? To a certain extent. One has to overcome a tremendous inertia; this is true of the whole developing world, the sensitivity to doing something new. But yes, we made for some progress.

Q: What were some of your frustrations, your disappointments during that period?

KLIEFORTH: Well, as always, a certain lack of funds, but we managed all right because we worked out very good — as indicated through the education exhibit — co-op ventures with the private side of the U.S. presence in Italy. Then I started working things out with other agencies of the U.S. government. The Park Service, for example. The Park Service

has a beautiful exhibits outfit; they really do. They turn out tremendous stuff. They turn out films, really attractive posters, and so forth. I always had to keep the Agency advised, but through a friend in the Park Service I was able to get all kinds of stuff and have nice little shows — and again, multi-media.

The Commerce Department participated in a water desalinization and purification exhibit in Turin called Puraqua, so we worked together with them. And with the Department of Agriculture in the cattle show in Verona. You can ask, what the hell's the USIA doing in a cattle show in Verona? You start with something that is germane, as in that case the 4-Hs, and then you get into American youth, and the participation of American youth in this particular, which happens to be the farm sector, and the necessity for food, and you wind up with NATO, and have a NATO thing.

We had a tremendous collection of great American artists, particularly sculptors, in Rome specifically and in Italy. So I got them together — some of them are very famous. We had some fierce arguments about Vietnam, and I said, “This isn't the issue. You're artists, you want people to see your stuff. All right, we'll show it, and let's leave politics out of it.” We opened the first show in Rome in the USIS building, which I modernized the inside of, and the library, which I turned into a usable center — such simple things as putting bookshelves on rollers; if you want more space, push them out against the wall and you'll get usable space. Every three months until the time I left we had an absolutely first-rate art show, which didn't cost us anything, not even insurance, because I arranged something with the Tyler School of Art in Rome, and their policy would cover as long as some of their stuff was there. So the Tyler School always had some stuff there; but they had very good people working there. We were able to accomplish a good deal.

Q: It sounds like you were able to turn your frustrations into successes.

KLIEFORTH: Yeah. And one of the things we invented was the Electronic Dialogue. It started in Italy, and there was quite a bit of resistance in the Agency, strange as it may

seem in retrospect. What we started out with was something very simple. We picked the individual, the Agency television people doing all the arrangements, and they would have him make a statement, talking to a specific audience, on whatever it was. We'd first show this VTR, and have an open phone line, and mikes all over the place so that people could talk to him, so there was backtalk. That was the original concept, and it worked out very well. One of those simple things, you wondered why somebody hadn't thought of it before. But there again, this was a team thing.

Q: Besides the things you've mentioned, do you have any other special memories of Rome that you'd like to talk about?

KLIEFORTH: I was there for six years, and served four ambassadors. The first one was Freddy Reinhardt, the second was Gardner Ackley, who had been chairman of the (Board of) Economic Advisers, the third one was the redoubtable Graham Martin, and the fourth one was John Volpe, ex-Secretary of Transportation and Governor of Massachusetts. As things went on — and during that time I was appointed career minister — but even before then, and particularly so during the time of Graham Martin, he picked a couple of people with whom he worked closely and that was it. So that I wound up being de facto assistant chief of mission, and was always acting DCM when the DCM was away, and I was charg# a number of times. I had liaison with the FAO, and with the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, which has to do with population problems, and there I was in between the State Department's office of population problems, whatever it's called, and the Vatican and other entities in Italy which were a little uptight on the subject.

It broadened the responsibility. It brought about thereby a very good integration of the USIS element into the embassy so that you had an across-the-front public diplomacy program. I had enough authority that I could ask and even demand the economic minister, who happened to be a good friend from the Senior Seminar days, or whatever. And I also had purview over all the public information aspects of our military in Italy, which isn't usual. I had it again in Germany. That's the way Martin wanted it, and that's the way it worked

out. It worked very well when we had a space exhibit. I talked RAI, the Italian network, into forking up $60,000, I think it was, and NASA delivered a little moon rock, and that was the piece de resistance. It went throughout Italy, seen by literally millions of people. I talked the Air Force and the Army into giving all the transportation. That was because I had this purview and got to know all these people; it's a lot easier when you know people.

Q: This was sort of a European JUSPAO.

KLIEFORTH: Yeah. Yeah. Excepting in Germany I alone had the responsibility, and for anything within Germany. They could appeal over my head to the ambassador.

Q: From Rome you went to Jakarta. Tell me about that assignment.

KLIEFORTH: This again was totally different. Indonesia, as you know, is an autarchic country, extremely tightly controlled, unbelievably corrupt, terribly corrupt. Dealing with the problems of corruption on a daily level is a real pain. For example, we'd get a shipment of books from the Agency for our library. They would sit in the warehouse in the harbor until money was paid under the table to release them. Then there was the phone scam. It didn't cost that much money. A little man came around every month and collected a thousand five hundred rupiahs, which was not much. If you didn't pay the guy your phone ceased to work. When Ambassador Newsom came, he got rather upset about it and talked to the Foreign Minister about it. He said, “It's ridiculous, here I am the American ambassador and have to pay 1,500 rupiahs out of my own pocket.” And he says, “It'll be taken care of.” The next month the little man didn't come — and the phone went out. He was fulminating with me, and I said, “Look, you know, local customs are local customs, and if you want your phone to work, that's what you've got to do.” So corruption was a problem.

While the government basically was pro-American — they were tremendous admirers of Nixon, by the way, and when we pulled out of Vietnam they were really traumatized, for good reason — still they were suspicious of foreigners. It was the kind of climate where the Soviet ambassador would come to me and ask me to help him get something done with

the Indonesian government. I acceded because they were planning to bring the Bolshoi ballet to Jakarta and the Indonesians wouldn't give them visas. I practically had the whole diplomatic community after me, saying, “You know Malik and all these people.” But they wouldn't budge. They didn't want any Soviets coming in. They'd make propaganda. It was very complicated, but that's the way it was.

So our program was very conservative, in the sense that everybody was afraid to stick out their neck because you'd get shot. So there again I decided on modernization as the peg to get things through. One accomplishment that I'm very happy with is a symposium on energy and the environment, sparked by the first offshore drilling on the coast of Sumatra. At that time we'd had this horrible oil spill here in California and learned a lot from it.

I should add that in Jakarta, three months after I got there, my deputy became very ill and had to be shipped out, then the DCM had a very bad medical situation and had to be out for four months, so that I became acting DCM. And the ambassador was out a number of times, so I was also charg#. But again, this was an advantage, because having been charg# and one of the players in the game, I went to the Minister of Minerals and Mines and Oil and sold him this idea that now was the time for Indonesia to have laws on oil exploitation and protecting the environment. He agreed, and said you have to talk to Adam Malik, and I did. He thought it was great. Then they talked to the President, Suharto, and he thought it was such a good idea that he gave his summer palace at Bogor as the place to have this symposium.

So we brought in — the Agency being extremely helpful — some of these oil spill people who'd been in California, and various other real good experts. And as a result of that, laws were enacted. Whether they were followed or not, I don't know. But again, here we were three days in Bogor, which is a beautiful place, originally the summer palace of the Dutch governor-general. You can get to talk about many other things, and you can have stuff around the table, so with that kind of approach we could bring in relevant American experience and then get to talk about our interests generally.

Then it turned out that the chiefs of staff and their center for strategic studies were absolutely fascinated with the CSCE, and what we were talking to the Russians about on strategic arms limitation, because one forgets that at that time the focus was of course on Europe and the Russians were also talking about the periphery. And Indonesia was on the periphery, with the Seventh Fleet, and Okinawa, and everything else, and that's what they were focused on. I had worked on CSCE matters in Rome, and then cabled the Agency, which was rather surprised to get the request to send everything they could on CSCE to Indonesia. But they did it, bless 'em. That gave me an entree, along with the fact that I spoke Italian and German — not all of them spoke English — and I even knew some Flemish and Dutch, which a lot of them did. You can get things in. You say, “Well, I'll send you the Wireless File,” which is innocuous and very good, and so the Wireless File distribution was increased.

The other part of the tightrope walk was that part of our natural constituency were the intellectuals, the educators and the artists, all of whom were in the opposition. We developed a very close relationship with them. Their leader, so to speak, was a former ambassador in Washington, Sujatmoko, who towered, and they couldn't arrest him because he was so popular. We had to do it without offending the government. We always had something on geography or something else innocuous. I traveled around Indonesia, went to the universities, and there was a great exchange. The thing was, at least in Indonesia, that we were not considered political officers or intelligence officers, and we were safe to be seen with. That was a big thing. And they would talk like a blue streak, and we were very well informed. It worked out, but it was deservedly called a hardship post. I was personally very enthusiastic as these things began opening up. They finally got rid of Sujatmoko, who is now president or dean of the UN International University in Tokyo.

Q: It sounds to me like things opened up because you were able, by taking a step at a time, to open them up.

KLIEFORTH: Yeah. Yeah.

Q: How long were you there?

KLIEFORTH: Two years.

Q: Any other memories you'd like to recount?

KLIEFORTH: No, not really. It sort of gets into practically a travelogue. I hate this cliche word, challenging, but it was. There again, the advantage of having been charg# and running the whole embassy. And I did it at times which were dicey, for example, when OPEC went into its first big price hike and I was ordered to tell the Indonesians to keep their price down. There had been a lot of preparatory messages, and I found the ambassador hadn't delivered one of them. So I went in cold into the thing, and the Indonesians were so worried they had their ambassador in London inquire whether there was a radical shift in U.S. policy because this guy Klieforth was coming up with all kinds of things. But the advantage of that was, again, that I could get the full cooperation of the economic part of the embassy, which had a petroleum fellow who was awfully good.

It enriched the program, as I did in Italy and as I would later do in Germany, by getting these people out, who in some cases were able to speak the local language, as part of the program enrichment, like working out a program with the AID people in the field of education in Indonesia. Then there was a Navy operation there, which was fantastic; they did research in tropical diseases, and they were always out in the bush. We worked out a public health program with them on prevention against various things such as liver fluke, and all this, that, and the other thing. Again, it didn't cost the Agency a nickel. So what am I doing in the liver fluke business? It opens doors. You're not only unfluking the livers, you're getting other things in the side, and you're broadening and enriching the program.

Q: So, where to then — Bonn?

KLIEFORTH: Bonn, Germany — which was the assignment that I was really interested in. The ambassador was Martin Hillenbrand, whom I'd known from the time when he was assistant secretary for Europe, and I'd known him when he was the DCM in Bonn. He was succeeded by Walter Stoessel, who wound up being Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, a very great diplomatist, really first-rate. Now, the German program was the largest that we had in the world at that time. In refreshing my mind here, we had 32 Americans, 160 Germans in Bonn, and seven branch posts, five German-American Institutes, with 48 Germans, plus the operation in West Berlin, plus general oversight over RIAS. So it was a big program. And one of my accomplishments was to get John Clyne there as my deputy. Alan Dodds was the cultural affairs officer, and we formed a troika.

When I arrived in the summer of '75, what was coming down the pike was the U.S. bicentennial. It very rapidly became clear that the Germans were going to celebrate this, not only with enthusiasm but to an enormous degree quantitatively. How it worked out qualitatively was to be seen. We not only had to get plugged into this, I wound up having to help the Germans coordinate among themselves, because it reached proportions which were absolutely staggering. In 1976, there were over 4,000 events in Germany to celebrate our bicentennial, of which 400 plus were developed entirely by USIS Germany, and we supported one way or the other another thousand. And we had some kind of American representative at almost each one of these. This was great, because we had all the consuls general, the consuls, forgotten vice consuls, the third man down in the agricultural attach#'s office. “You go out and spread the word,” and boy, did they enjoy it. They got into these German festivities. They were briefed what to do. It went beautifully. So we had an official, saying, “I'm from the American embassy. I bring you greetings from the ambassador.” They enjoyed it, and it also brought immediate integration between USIS and the entire embassy.

Then, because of my military background — I'd been in the Air Force; in fact, I was on a tour of duty in the Air Force before I came to the Agency — and especially the

Senior Seminar, I was able to get the assistance of EUCOM, EUSAREUR, and USAFE. You know, open up your coffers and do everything; every marching band in Germany participating, and so on.

To answer your question, Why? I began thinking about this, and decided that what this portended was a rite of passage. The Germans had been under American tutelage since the end of the war, and this was now 1976, 30 years after American military government really became functioning after the first six months of occupation; in '45 and early '46, they were making shift. They'd gotten where they had gotten in the world. This was unconscious, it wasn't planned, but they wanted to thank America, and it was overwhelming. In proportion to the population, there were far more celebrations in the Federal Republic of Germany than there were in the United States. So this was something, and the Agency came through with everything that it could.

The German government had decided that they were going to have several events, but nobody expected this (kind of outpouring), and that's why I got into the middle of it, because we were the only ones who knew what the hell was going on; they kept coming to us for anything. There again, I'd go to places like the Park Service and you name it to get something to enhance what they were doing. The military were tremendously helpful; not the usual thing of weapons shows and that sort of thing, but get out your officers who speak German, or sergeants or privates, and we worked out a whole series of programs for them. They were a little nervous in the beginning, but I sold them on the idea of a troop-community relations program, saying, “This is the greatest chance you're ever going to have.” I had to deal with the generals, and they bought it. It left us exhausted, but we went through this thing. The result was that we were plugged in everywhere in the national government, the lender governments, and local governments.

There was nothing parallel to it except the time immediately after the war when, as you know, we had USIS posts all over Germany and public affairs officers and all that sort of thing. Then we were the masters and they were the subjected, and here we were as

partners. That greatly increased German support for the German-American Institutes, which cost the Agency practically nothing — books, one American officer — and they paid everything. It was a great opportunity, and there again, especially after Ambassador Stoessel arrived, we had a small working committee — the ambassador, the DCM, the political counselor and myself — and worked out a public diplomacy program that affected every part of the U.S. presence in Germany, including all the military. As I mentioned earlier, there I was given absolute purview. The rule was that if this were a local flap or problem that you can solve, don't bother us, but anything that might remotely hit the press, you've got to let me know ahead of time. That worked out very well, though there were some boo-boos, like when the Air Force flew in some fancy planes without letting the Germans know ahead of time, and then they called on me to help, but from then on it worked beautifully.

Q: After hearing this description it sounds anticlimactic to ask: what was the routine running of USIS in Germany?

KLIEFORTH: I had a large staff and a very good one. A normal program year had a thousand events, that was par for the course. With all the bickering back and forth, which is normal between a field operation and the central (office) — if you read Caesar again, you'll find how he bitched about those bastards back in Rome who didn't give him support — what the Agency could give, it did give. Some of the things were really remarkable. The other thing is that because of this bicentennial thing and because of the fact that I'm bilingual, I traveled all over Germany and gave about 150 appearances — radio, television, stand-up speaker, lecturer at universities, high schools, you name it, utilizing myself as a resource.

Q: When did you retire?

KLIEFORTH: October, 1980.

Q: Since you retired, you've taken on some special assignments for the Agency. Would you tell us about some of those?

KLIEFORTH: No, I haven't taken on special assignments for the Agency other than doing some inspecting in the Far East, but I became very involved in youth exchange programs, and worked primarily with Youth for Understanding. In the end I had to create my own corporation because we — we being Gloria and myself — we had to hire people, and when you hire people you have Social Security deductions, health insurance and other things, so we incorporated under California law, and the contract was with us. The major program we worked on was the German-American, U.S. Congress-German Bundestag program, which has grown and proliferated and is really doing beautifully. And I've sort of midwifed not only between the Department of State and the Agency and the three major participating organizations — which were Youth for Understanding, AFS and EIL — but when I got to Germany, between the Bundestag and the foreign office and the various German exchanges people, who were all in separate corners and not really talking to each other much. Because I knew all of them from before, I went around wearing several hats and got them together and helped to get the program launched. The other one was a program in Great Britain, which happily is going along very well under quite a few auspices.

To come back to the German program, one of the things to do is, you've got to think big. One of the things we conceived was to have a retrospective exhibit of 200 years of American art. The Agency was tremendously supportive from the beginning, especially Hal Schneidman, who had worked with me in Rome; he understood what I was up to. And he should, we were very close. As a matter of fact, he gave my wife away when we were married. We had a message from President Ford, and so forth and so on. It started with people like Benjamin West, John Singleton Copley, John Trumbull, Ralph Earle, Charles Wilson Peale, Gilbert Stuart, Washington Austin, James Peale, Thomas Sully, then going through the following century into the moderns: Arshile Gorky, Jackson Pollock, Thomas

Hart Benton, Andrew Wyeth, Hans Hoffman, Mark Rothko, Frank Stella, Rauschenberg, and so on.

My suggestion was to go to a lesser-known good museum, and they went to Baltimore, which is a very good museum. They had never done anything like this. They got the contract, and found a lady whose name was Anne Vandevanter, who was the guest curator of the Baltimore Museum of Art. She got all these great paintings from museums and private collections all over the United States. Nothing like this had ever been seen in Europe. It was an eye-opener, because they knew nothing about 19th-century or 18th-century American art. They knew Lichtenstein and Jasper Johns and Andy Warhol, Frankenthaler and Willem deKooning, but this was a real eye-opener, and when it became known, people were complaining that it was shown in Bonn and not in Cologne, Hamburg or what not. But Bonn was the capital, and for the two hundredth anniversary of the U.S. we wanted it to be there. It then went on to Belgrade, Rome and Warsaw. But this was an absolutely first-class show. I told the Germans, “We're going to deliver a first-class show, but it's going to cost money, and you're going to have to help with the money.” And they did. They took over all of the insurance, which is a very costly aspect.

The last one we did was on von Steuben. This was in Berlin, and opened shortly after I left. A very nice thing: the Germans dedicated the whole exhibit to me. I felt that was very nice. It was a lot of fun.

Q: In looking back on your career, what are your feelings? Would you recommend this career to some young person today?

KLIEFORTH: I would, with one caveat, and that's the caveat I applied to myself. I never entered the service of the Agency with the idea of making it a career. I always kept for myself the reservation that if I was in a situation that I couldn't tolerate — to say as a point of honor sounds stuffy, but I think you know what I mean, principle, or you name it — then I'd say goodbye and leave instantly, if need be. I kept telling everybody, which happened

to be true, that I had my license as a truck driver and I could always go and drive a truck, which I had when I was going graduate work. I wouldn't starve. I have told this to many young people who were thinking about coming into the Agency and who came into the Agency: always have an alternative in your hip pocket, because if you're going to be successful, in the sense that you're going to have a career that you really enjoy and are really proud of, you shouldn't have to go through a lot of compromises. You have to go through it thinking that what you're doing is right and that you're making some kind of a contribution, not bureaucratically pushing some program that you can't believe in. If it gets to that point, then you've got to quit. But you've got to have an alternative. With that one caveat, I certainly recommend this work.

Q: You have no regrets?

KLIEFORTH: Lord, no!

Q: You're one of the few people in USIA who spent many years with VOA and many years in the foreign service, which gives you a special perspective. How do you see the relationship between these really quite different informational activities? Should there even be such a relationship?

KLIEFORTH: In long terms, they are mutually supportive. When you take out the news from VOA broadcasts, you leave an enormous spectrum of airtime that is devoted to culture, to political commentary, to science, you name it. There is really an enormous field of what the Voice does in all of its languages to convey what, in an oversimplified and almost distorted way, is called a picture of America. You don't want a picture that is flat; you want something that is dimensional, in order to have it understood. Essentially, the people in the field don't deal in the news so much but deal with the news to a greater degree than would be expected, particularly in areas, as I had the experience in Indonesia, where there's a restriction of information. We'd have the Wireless File, which has an awful

lot of news in it, and flog it around all over the place, whereas in a sophisticated place like Bonn or Rome that doesn't carry that much weight.

There always has been validity for that, even in the field of news and long-range news. What's going on in your country? Right now it's the election. People want to get backgrounded. In many posts, all of them, I used to send back home for VOA commentaries that weren't so constricted by time that they'd lose their value — commentaries on basic policies and issues and so forth. That was useful stuff. Then in the whole other area of information, supporting NATO or whatever it is, you have the same mission but working through a different medium.

Q: One aspect of the relationship between VOA and USIA that has troubled a lot of us VOA careerists — having nothing to do with competence or the caliber of the people concerned, but a matter of principle and of system — is the fact that the VOA personnel system is dependent upon the foreign service personnel system, and so many people come back from the field that have to have jobs in Washington that the Agency has designated all the executive positions at the Voice of America, and a number of non-executive positions, as foreign service-designated. A number of the people we've had from the foreign service have worked out superbly. A number have been time-servers, who were there for their two years or three years, could hardly wait to get back to the field, and made it very evident they had no interest in the Voice of America and they just occupied a chair. This has put a ceiling on the opportunity for a number of internal people. I was lucky, I got to be the senior civil servant. As (then Deputy Director) Bill Miller said, we had to have some continuity in the front office, and so he designated my position the only non-foreign service position at the time of the FAS back in '71. I have thought there ought to be some way for the institution to take advantage of the expertise, knowledge and recent experience in the field of people from the career foreign service without having to put them "in charge" of every division, branch, or other element of the organization.

KLIEFORTH: I agree with you entirely. I was twice asked to become VOA Director — the first time when Frank Shakespeare became Agency director, and the second time when Jim Keogh became Agency director. I turned it down both times for various reasons, a primary one being that the VOA director should be appointed by the administration. That's the man they have confidence in. But everything below him, starting with the deputy, should be people who have professional competence and expertise in broadcasting, or bring to a specific job a specific quantum of expertise, knowledge and experience that is needed at that time for that job, on a limited assignment. I think it is wrong to stack the Voice with people as you say, particularly who are time servers. I think in Henry's time, and mine, and even before, we avoided that. We took in some people, but the Voice is large and, putting it bluntly, if they weren't useable there was always some place we could find for them. But by and large we adhered to the principle that the man had to fit the job.

There are two types of expertise. One is the broadcasting expertise, which you don't get out of a school of journalism, especially one that was attended 30 years ago. The second one is the expertise of overseas field knowledge. You cannot bring a man in from the field and expect him to be knowledgeable to the degree required about current events in the United States. It has to be somebody who has been here a long time and knows something, for example, how the Congress operates, a very intricate thing. These are people who should come out of the domestic service or are hired for two years, if possible, to serve as experts in a particular slot. I understand the problem of the Agency in placing foreign service officers in this kind of a situation, but it is as wrong as bringing in — looking at it from an entirely different position — civilians into command positions in the Army, Navy or Air Force.

Q: So what's the answer? Where would you put such people?

KLIEFORTH: That is for the Agency to find out. And part of the answer, it seems to me, is to have the smallest number of political appointees in the Agency, because the Agency needs the continual transference of people from Washington to the field and back, and

so forth. I have such a remote experience with the Agency in the last eight years that I can't really comment, but my impression is that there is a proportionately higher number of people occupying senior positions in the Agency, whose main merit is that they're promoted by the administration presently in power.

Q: Even in the case of the Wireless File, all the chiefs of the respective area desks are foreign service officers, so you have really only three career people — that is, Wireless File career people in the central political/economic branch — and everybody else in leadership positions is foreign service, just as at VOA. So they suffer from the same problem, on a completely different scale.

KLIEFORTH: No, it should be the qualification of the person for the job. You can have a foreign service officer, somebody like Bill Haratunian, who developed a professional competence in international broadcasting, then went into the field and then went back, and Vallimarescu. That's all well and good, but those are fairly rare exceptions. VOA in my opinion should be a professional broadcasting outfit, staffed by people who can broadcast professionally, period, and bring in whatever knowledge is required to enable the Voice to meet its various responsibilities. For one thing, you wouldn't put a foreign service officer in as an engineer, and to me the engineer is just as much part of the Voice as someone sitting in Worldwide English.

Q: We've covered a lot of territory here. Do you have any further thoughts, further memories, further anecdotes?

KLIEFORTH: There's one thing I want to conclude with, and that is one of the things I consider a contribution: the concept of the Successor Generation. I invented it in Germany as a result of the bicentennial. I was talking to an awful lot of young Germans, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds, down to the high school level, getting up there as a stand-up speaker and not giving a written lecture. An advantage I had was that I had been in Germany during the Weimar Republic, under the Nazis, in the post-war period, and

now. I said, “There's not much you can tell me that I don't know.” And when it came to political argument, I'd read my Marx, I'd read Hegel, I'd read Engels; I'd studied them at the University of Louvain in Belgium. I'm not saying I could snow 'em, but I could paralyze them by bringing in what Hegel had to say about the German mentality, for example, or Marx about the Russians. So I was directing more and more of the program to reach this audience, because they were moving into a huge generation gap, which was not the normal generation gap.

The moment I left the Agency I wrote a piece for the Atlantic Council on this subject, which the Atlantic Council put into a special study, in its entirety, as an annex. Congressman Bob Michel, who I think was still Majority Leader, sent it around to all kinds of people, including to then-Secretary of State Haig, and somebody there made sure the Agency got hold of it, and somebody gave the concept to Mr. Wick. And he saw this as an opportunity to run with it. Then it went on. Here is a book on the successor generation. I'm not a scientist who puts this kind of book together, but Ken Adler (of USIA Research) wrote the lead piece to this book. This book, which helped to make the German-American parliamentary exchange possible, is the result of that initiative. So that is my conclusion. You think on what you did, maybe a help to prevent pollution of the beaches of Sumatra, and maybe do something about reaching the successor generation in Europe.

Q: Proud achievements.

KLIEFORTH: It's something to be satisfied with.

Q: Thank you very much, sir.

End of interview